

LBJ Thinks JFK's Holdovers

Washington (UPI) — Former President Lyndon B. Johnson feels that the holdover staff from the Kennedy administration "undermined" his administration and "bored from within to create problems for us."

He also accused the holdovers of leaking slanted information to newsmen.

The LBJ interview was the third in a series with Columbia Broadcasting System's Walter Cronkite, shown Saturday night.

Asked to amplify on his painful moments, Johnson said:

"Well, the difference in viewpoints and the very fact that some of the people who served did not share either the desire or the hopes that I had for the country and for the government, and that they, in effect, undermined the administration and bored from within to create problems for us and leaked information that was slanted and things of that nature.

None Named

"A good many of them resigned at certain periods and left the impression that the government was not in keeping with their views and so forth."

Johnson did not name anybody, but said: "I endured some handicaps and I suffered some

heartaches, some disappointments, because of my desire to try to present a united front and let nothing that I did create an excuse for division."

He rejected the idea that Robert F. Kennedy had led a clique with a political objective within the administration. "I don't believe that all of those who left," Johnson said, "left because someone directed or urged them to. I think they were grief-stricken."

He did say later in the interview, however: "I think there must have been a calculated effort on somebody's part, I don't know who, to try to make it appear that I didn't get along with the president's staff, although I employed them and asked them to continue to serve me and they did."

'Terrifying'

Johnson also revealed that he was concerned about the fatal trip to Dallas by John F. Kennedy at the time it was being planned and rejected reports that Kennedy had planned to dump him as vice president in the 1964 election.

His "first thought" when he learned that he was president, Johnson said, was "that this is a terrifying thing that may have international consequences, that this might be an international conspiracy of some kind."

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Were 'Bored From Within,' Created Problems

Johnson said he was concerned about Kennedy's safety in Dallas because "so many of our friends were concerned. We got letters on it. There were very ugly things being said..."

Some of Johnson's responses in the interview filmed last fall at the LBJ Ranch in Texas were deleted at Johnson's request. He said national security was involved.

Informed sources have said, however, that the deleted portions omit Johnson's opinion stated often in the privacy of the White House that he questions the "single assassin" theory of the Warren Commission which attributed the assassination solely to Lee Harvey Oswald.

'Not Intimate'

Johnson admitted in the interview that his relationship with President Kennedy was "not personally intimate."

"We were not like brothers, we were not constant companions. I don't recall that we ever had an element of bitterness or deep feeling enter into any of our discussions. We were friendly, cordial, but not personally intimate."

He said he trusted Kennedy and believed he had positive assurances that he would be on the ticker with Kennedy in 1964.

Johnson said Kennedy's last words to him were spoken in Fort Worth, Tex., after he had seen the crowds he was drawing. He said Kennedy told him: "You can be sure of one thing, we're going to carry two states next year — Massachusetts and Texas."

Much of the interview gave Johnson a chance to refute or explain some of the charges made in William Manchester's book, "Death of a President."

Denies Friction

He denied there was any friction and bad feeling between him and the Kennedy staff aboard Air Force One on the plane trip back to Washington from Dallas. He said he didn't recall RFK brushing by him brusquely while entering the plane.

He also denied that his relationship with Mrs. Kennedy (now Jacqueline Onassis) was bad. "I know there were stories about Mrs. Kennedy feeling aloof from me," he said, "but Mrs. Kennedy talked to me and expressed herself to me a number of times."

He said: "Mrs. Kennedy and I were in frequent communication during all those early days as we had been throughout the years."

As for his own assessment of Kennedy and his problems in following in his footsteps, Johnson said: "He was a great public hero and anything that I did, that someone didn't approve of, they would always feel that President Kennedy wouldn't have done that — that he would have done it in a different way, that he wouldn't have made that mistake."

Misty-Eyed

He appeared misty-eyed near the end of the interview when he was asked if there were anything that he would have done differently in his early presidency.

"There's nothing that I'm aware of that I did about going to Texas or coming back from Texas or my relations with President Kennedy's family or President Kennedy's program that I would change."

"I felt I was a trustee that had the responsibility and the constitutional requirement to carry on after he (Kennedy) had been taken from us. I took his program and family after he was fallen and I did everything that I would want a man to do for my program or my family if the same thing happened to me..."

"And I don't want anyone to ever say that I ever let him down for a moment."